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ABSTRACT

Based on the concept that the natural way of learning is by making mistakes in which immediate self-correction takes place, this booklet discuses how teachers can develop their own sequential spelling tests. The booklet discusses the five steps in giving a sequential spelling test (read the word aloud, students repeat the word, students attempt to spell the word, teacher shows the correct spelling of the word, and students correct the spelling of the word before going on to the next word). The booklet also discusses how to determine which word families to teach and offers sequencing patterns so that teachers can run through all the patterns of English spelling. (RS)

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How to Develop Your Own Sequential Spelling Tests

by

Don McCabe

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AVKO "Great Idea"
Reprint Series #620

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How to
Develop Your Own
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by

Don McCabe

AVKO Great Idea Reprint Series

#620

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What is AVKO?

AVKO is a non-profit tax-exempt membership organization.

AVKO was founded in 1974.

AVKO is subsidized by donations and grants.

AVKO is open to membership to anyone interested in helping others learn to read and write.

AVKO is run by members from as far away as Alaska and Florida.

AVKO's daily operations are handled by volunteers.

AVKO plans to build and operate a model reading research center in a YEAR-AROUND **camp** setting that would economically and efficiently service the needs of dyslexics of all ages.

AVKO hopes to spread the concept that parent and spouse tutoring in spelling/reading skills can be successfully taught in adult community education classes and that members of a problem reader's support group can greatly assist the efforts of any volunteer tutor working in the literacy movement.

AVKO provides newsletters and economical opportunities to pursue individual research projects and to take part in large scale cooperative research projects that have immediate practical applications.

AVKO is attempting to accomplish these goals primarily through the profits generated by the inservices, workshops and the sale of materials developed for the special needs of students, parents, and adults.

How to Develop Your Own

Sequential Spelling Tests

Those who have tried *Sequential Spelling I, II, III, IV, V, VI, or VII,* (McCabe, 1974, 1993) know that the method works. It's simple and it follows solid principles of learning.

However, there may may be times in which the word family being presented has already been learned by your students. We feel that this isn't necessarily bad and that overlearning is right for many. However, for those teachers who wish to give maximum individualization and to provide maximum learning in the shortest time span practical, we feel that you may wish to use the AVKO SEQUENTIAL SPELLING TECHNIQUE without using the AVKO spelling books.

First the Basic SEQUENTIAL Technique

This technique is based on the concept that the natural way of learning is by making mistakes in which immediate self-correction takes place. This is the way we learned to walk, talk, feed ourselves, ride a bike. Therefore, rather than having the teacher correct the test after it is given, we insist that each student correct each word as the test is given.

To make it easier for students to IMMEDIATELY apply (OR TRANSFER) what they learned from one word to the spelling of another, the words are presented in word family sequences, which has been referred to as "vertical word processing." For example:

all
tall
stall
install
installment
installation

Steps in Giving a Sequential Spelling Test

1. Give the word. Use the word in a sentence. Repeat the word. The very best way is to have the sentences on photo-copied or dittoed teacher-made (or student-made!) worksheets with blanks to fill in.

2. Have students repeat the word and/or sentence. With older students this step may be eliminated if it proves too much of a hassle.

3. Have students attempt the spelling. It is essential that each student at least makes an attempt.

   In order to LEARN FROM A MISTAKE, a mistake must be made. In order to learn to tolerate personal mistakes, mistakes must be made in an atmosphere that allows for mistakes.

4. Show the correct spelling by showing it on an overhead projector or by writing it on a chalkboard.

5. Call out the word and the letters. Each student repeats the word and the letters and corrects his/her own spelling. If a mistake has been made, the student is to erase the incorrect spelling before writing the word correctly.

THE STUDENTS MUST NEVER MAKE A CHECK MARK

No matter how many words a student may miss during the giving of the test, the paper should look exactly the same as that of a student who correctly spelled every word the first time.

PACE IS ESSENTIAL. The greatest music is boring if it is dragged out. Speed and liveliness of presentation is vital.

6. REPEAT STEPS 1-5 FOR EACH WORD.

1. Teacher gives word.
2. Students repeat word.
3. Students write word.
4. Teacher gives correct spelling.
5. Students correct own spelling before next word is given.

IMPORTANT: Do NOT give the words to the students to study. When students study words for a test and then miss them, they have only learned that they are dumb! Students don't feel dumb if they miss a word they weren't given for study -- but if they get one right that they know they didn't know the day before -- Wow! They know they have to have some "smarts" after all.

Determining which word families to teach

1. Using any controlled word list, test your students' ability to spell the ending sounds of words (rimes*) by giving them the initial letters (onsets). For example:

pain The first letter in *pain* is *p*. Spell *pain*, as in: Correcting papers is a *pain* in the neck.

sail The first letter in *sail* is *s*. Spell *sail*, as in to *sail* a boat on a lake.

chair The first two letters in *chair* are *ch*. Spell *chair* as in to sit in your *chair*.

2. After you have found three word families (rimes) that need to be mastered, make out your list of words that belong to each word family. If you happen to be using any of AVKO's diagnostic tests, you will know on which page in AVKO's *Patterns of English Spelling* that you can find all of the words already listed for you. If you use other diagnostic tests, all you have to do is use the index of *The Patterns of English Spelling* to locate the page on which you can find all the words in the family you have selected.

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* *Rimes* in the latest academic jargon refer to ending spelling patterns that rhyme. We prefer the older jargon: *word families*.

When you look at all the words listed on that page in *The Patterns of English Spelling*, you may elect to skip some of them. This book was written as a reference tool for teachers at all levels. Hence, little pre-censoring was done. If you don't have the book, you can construct your own by simple trial and error. Just try adding letters (onsets) in front of the ending (rime) and keep the real words that you want to use.

Let's suppose that you used the *Dolch* list instead of the *AVKO Suggested Order of Diagnosis and Remediation of "SIMPLE" Words(#614)*, and let's further suppose that you wanted to work with the LONG A sound so you picked the words *rain*, *chair*, and *cake* which enough of your students couldn't spell to make it worth your while developing a special sequence.

	Day 1 BASE WORDS	Day 2 ADD -S	Day 3 ADD -ED	Day 4 ADD -ING
1.	rain	rains	rained	raining
2.	train	trains	trained	training
3.	strain	strains	strained	straining
4.	drain	drains	drained	draining
5.	gain	gains	gained	gaining
6.	regain	regains	regained	regaining
7.	pain	pains	pained	paining
8.	Spain	**didn't**	**doesn't**	**didn't**
9.	stain	stains	stained	staining
10.	plain	plains	rainy	**doesn't**

Because not all words have -s, -ed, -ing endings and because some have -y, -ly, -er, -est endings, etc., there will always be blanks to slip in the irregular demons (repeatedly!) as in the example above.

Notice that on Day 1 we only had only base words from the -ain family (rime).

On Day 2 we gave a "review" of the first day by using all the words except *Spain* in the -s form. Note, that each base word generally is reviewed three times: -s, -ed, and -ing forms. The number of times the family sound is reviewed is approximately forty times for even a rather small family or about four times for each word in the family.

On Day 5 we begin a new family, the -air family. Note: There are still a few -ain words left as mastery review. On Day 6 we begin another new family. Often what happens is that the three families being worked on are in three different stages of learning: Introductory, temporarily learned, and the almost-mastered stages.

Day 5	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8
BASE WORDS	ADD -S	ADD -ED	ADD -ING
air	airs	aired	airing
chair	chairs	chaired	chairing
pair	pairs	paired	pairing
repair	repairs	repaired	repairing
fair	fairs	doesn't	didn't
ADD -ING	ADD BASE WORDS	ADD -S	ADD -ED
regaining	stair	stairs	shouldn't
paining	hair	hairs	pained
won't	cake	cakes	caked
staining	take	takes	took
could	lake	lakes	couldn't

On the next page are blanks that you can reproduce ad infinitum to provide yourself with sequencing patterns. If you would rather not do your own sequencing, you can always try AVKO's. Write to the AVKO Foundation Spelling Division, 3084 W. Willard Road, Clio, Mich. 48420-7801 for a free spelling catalog.

Day 1 Base Word	Day 2 + -s	Day 3 +-ed	Day 4 +ing	Day 5 Base Word
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

Day 6 + -s	Day 7 +-ed	Day 8 +ing	Day 9 Base Word	Day 10 + -s
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				
8.				
9.				
10.				

Note: Tests can be varied in length from five to twenty-five words according to your students' needs, *enthusiasm*, and time available.

For variety, you may elect to mix up the endings so that the students will have to be alert and not just automatically add the -s or the -ed or the -ing as the case may be. For example, one day might have: rain / trains/ strained/ etc., and the next day might be: rains / train / straining / etc.

An Overview of the Services
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